

(Sherlock) Holmes Video

video

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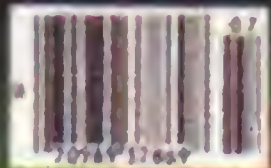
The #1 Magazine of Home Video

Video Olympiad

How to Shoot the Competition

Network TV's Game Plan

Video Training



Rock Video
Hot New Directors

SEMI-ANNUAL VIDEOFESTS

Optima Stereo Color Camcorder • Olympus Portapak VCR & Tube-Timer
Flower-Frank Loading LaserDisc Player • Smar-Dolly Stereo VHS VCR



78



82



43

Features

Camera Mania

Camcorders and automatic features highlight this year's survey of an increasingly complex product.
By Murray Slovick 58

Holmes Video

Literature's most enduring sleuth is also a major presence in video.
By Tom Soter..... 64

Olympic Special

Video Training: For Olympians

How semi-pro jocks are using video.
... And Other Amateurs
How you can use it too.
By Barry Janoff..... 72

ABC Shoots the Olympics

Tales of Skycam, and other great feats of technical strength.
By Robert Carney..... 74

Personal Best

Shooting tips for the video-camera-toting Olympic spectator.
By Roderick Woodcock..... 76

Video Decathlon

Ten ways to test and increase your surefootedness with a video camera.
By John Bishop..... 78

Rock Makers

The men who manufacture MTV magic are crossing over into Hollywood.
By Noe Goldwasser..... 80

Doublevision

A stereo broadcast standard is here; here's what it means to us.
By Roderick Woodcock..... 84

Program Guide

News & Views

By Ken Winslow 39

Top 10

Tape & Disc Sales & Rentals 41

Reviews

Film & Video Clips 42

Directory

What's New on Tape & Disc 51

Videotests

Olympus VX-303-U Color Camera
Olympus VC-103-U Portable VCR
& VR-203-U Tuner/Timer
Pioneer LD-700 LaserDisc Player
Sansui SV-R9000 Dolby VHS VCR
By Berger-Braithwaite Labs 87



About the Cover. The summer Olympics are a video as well as an athletic event. Cover photo by Vittorio Sartor; neon by Neon City Inc.

Columns

Channel One

Official Olympic Quiz 6

Fast Forward

Sony-MTV Pact 8

Feedback

Beta vs. BS 10

New Products

Sony's 26-Inch Trinitrons..... 12

Fine Tuning

Pertinent Qs, Helpful As
By Roderick Woodcock..... 20

Videogram

A Nice Gesture
By William Wolfe..... 26

Arcade Alley

Games with Character
By Bill Kunkel & Arnie Katz..... 28

TV Den

Octopi and Other Hazards
By Roderick Woodcock..... 30

New Channels

Pay-TV: The \$2 Question
By Tim Onosko 32

Video Bookshelf

'Chaplin, the Mirror of Opinion'
By George L. George..... 128

People

Diane Keaton's Directorial Debut
By Lorenzo Carcaterra 130

Off the Air

101 Uses for your VCR
By Bruce Apar 132

Arcade Alley

Electronic Games

Games with Character

by Bill Kunkel
& Arnie Katz



'Rod Hero' to the rescue in 'H.E.R.O.'; striking gold for the Atari 2600.

Conceiving games around identifiable and individualized characters has become more common in the last year or so. The desire to exploit licensed properties like "Pac-Man," "Donkey Kong," and the "Smurfs" is a factor, but the most important reason is undoubtedly the simplest: players

like character games because they are more involving. This month let's look at a few recent computer and video games that have attempted to hop aboard the bandwagon.

Saving doomed miners from subterranean graves

is the goal in **H.E.R.O.** (Activision/Atari 2600/cartridge), a 256-screen program by a relatively new designer, John Van Ryzin. The arcader uses the joystick to maneuver the rescuer by means of the copper-pack strapped to his back. The airborne protagonist is armed with a standard-issue zap gun and also has a limited supply of explosives which come in handy for blowing a path through obstructing walls.

When "H.E.R.O." 's hero reaches a trapped miner, he must give the victim a reviving gust of oxygen before traveling even deeper into the labyrinthine passages. Dangers include snakes which dart from side tunnels and bizarre insects that swarm through many of the mine shafts. "H.E.R.O." is a marvelously playable game that rivals "Pitfall II" in overall scope. To the dedicated electronic gamer, finding a

program of this quality for the humble Atari 2600 is better than striking gold.

Sammy Lightfoot (Sierra On-Line/ColecoVision-Adam/cartridge), his long hair waving in the breeze, bounces on trampolines, hops from platform to platform, and swings across chasms on the slenderest of ropes in a multiphase jumping-and-climbing contest. This circus-themed action game has been available for several popular home computers but has not previously been produced for a video-game machine.

Graphics are plain and audio only average, but what really keeps this cartridge from being a significant addition to the library of ColecoVision software is the woeful instruction folder. Cuteness isn't a viable substitute for hard facts. Take this typical passage, which appears in the rulebook under the heading "How to Play Sammy Lightfoot": "Ladies and gentlemen, let me direct your attention to our center ring. . . . Sammy will leap huge circus balls and fly through the air over scorching flames. . . . Finally, to amaze and delight you, Sammy will swing on a trick rope. . . .".

This is actually a half-baked description of the game's basic play-mechanic, but there's no attempt to relate this abstract theme to specific situations. For instance, the rules don't mention that the gamer must hold down the action button on the joystick for the entire time during which Sammy is swinging on a rope.

The cartridge itself is moderately entertaining. The trampolines are a fresh element, and a few timely

humorous touches, such as the pumpkin in sunglasses who guards the end of the first playscreen, are welcome.

Bruce Lee (DataSoft/Atari home computers/32K disk), master of the martial-arts movies, is dead but his legend continues to grow through posthumously released films and this multi-art action/adventure. The secret of eternal life and untold treasures await Lee, but the path through nearly two dozen multiscreen playfields is byzantine and arduous.

Giving our hero grief are the hulking Green Yamo and the sinister Ninja. The former moves slower than Lee, but one blow from a kingsize foot can send the lighter hero reeling across the screen. There are also automatic defenses, such as electrically charged gateways, that can cost Lee one of the three "falls" with which he begins the game.

Although basically a solitaire game, "Bruce Lee" includes a pair of two-player options. The contestants can either alternate against a computer-controlled Ninja and Yamo, or players can alternate controlling Bruce Lee and Green Yamo, with the computer retaining direction of the Ninja. Playfield graphics don't attain state-of-the-art complexity but are smooth and top-quality overall.

"Bruce Lee" is exactly the kind of action game most computerists want. Things happen at a good clip, but strategy is much more important than mere stick-twiddling for ultimate success. 